



Kalamazoo
Public Library

THE KPL PLAN 2019–2022

**Kalamazoo Public Library
Strategic Plan
2019–2022**

**Adopted by the Kalamazoo Public Library
Board of Trustees
2019**

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Acknowledgments

The development of the strategic plan took many hours and the dedicated effort of many people. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who helped make this plan a reality:

- The Kalamazoo Public Library staff for their contributions to the process, and who will ultimately make this plan succeed.
- The members of the Library Board of Trustees for their participation and support of the process.
- The members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their time and expertise in interviewing community leaders and participating in a time-consuming planning meeting.
- The community leaders who agreed to be interviewed for this process, as well as the community members who attended Community Conversations and shared their aspirations for the community.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

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Executive Summary

Regularly-timed strategic planning is a process needed to set direction and clarity for the library, and to align the library's resources in order to maximize impact for the community. A well-developed strategic planning process in 2010, and a revisit in 2014 with ALA-endorsed "Planning for Results" methodology, guided the library's planning efforts by producing strategic priorities that served the organization and community very well for the past eight years. By concentrating on a defined set of priorities, staff and the board have focused their planning, spending, and attention to community needs and impacts based on a common vision, allowing for stronger cohesion and a clearer road for the future. To be good stewards, it is the library's responsibility to continually reflect on itself and its community to ensure that our future vision remains relevant and accountable. A new process, a new look, a new assessment was needed at this time to ensure that our upcoming alignment of resources matches our vision, core values, and new priorities gleaned from a process that not only listened to our close constituents but also to our entire community.

In order to guide this effort, the board elected to work with consultants at the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services of Lansing, MI, to facilitate a strategic planning process that would help to align library services with the aspirations and needs of the community. Based on the work of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, community members were asked, "What kind of community do you want?" and "How can the library help?"

The Strategic Planning Committee recommended that the Library Board adopt three strategic areas of focus for the period 2019–22. These key focus areas encompass KPL's commitment to **engaging the community, advancing equity and inclusion, and inspiring literacy, learning, and experiences.**

Overview of the Planning Process

1. The library board approved working with consultants from the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS) to facilitate the creation of a new strategic plan that would be based on community needs. MCLS, based in Lansing, MI, is a non-profit, member-driven organization whose mission is to facilitate sharing resources and to collaborate with other organizations to benefit Michigan and Indiana libraries. MCLS utilizes a planning process based on The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation's "Turning Outward" approach. "Turning Outward" is a process that entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.
2. A nineteen-person Strategic Planning Committee was assembled, which included representatives from the library board, the library staff, and the Friends of the Library.
3. At an initial meeting with the consultants, the Strategic Planning Committee brainstormed a list of community leaders to interview, as well as a strategy to invite community members to participate in Community Conversations. The participants needed to represent as many groups and stakeholders in the Kalamazoo Public Library service area as possible.
4. Strategic Planning Committee members were each assigned community leaders to interview. The interview was based on The Harwood Institute's "Ask" exercise, which entailed asking five simple questions to get a sense of people's aspirations for the community and how the library might help the community to achieve those aspirations. Fifty-seven community leaders participated in the interviews.
5. MCLS consultant David Votta conducted five Community Conversations with 43 community members. These conversations were 90-120 minutes long and were about what they wanted their community to be, what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations, and how the library might help.
6. MCLS consultants compiled the information from the community leader interviews and the Community Conversations to identify themes. This information was used to create a "Public Knowledge Summary" to present the information that was gathered.
7. Following the completion of the Public Knowledge Summary, Library Director, Ryan Wieber, and Head of Branch and Circulation Services, Kevin King, conducted two focus groups with staff and one focus group with Library Trustees to gather input on which of the community's aspirations the library could most strategically address.
8. In addition to the Public Knowledge Summary, MCLS consultants created a data package that included a benchmarking report, five-year library usage statistics, and demographic information. Consultants benchmarked data points from the Kalamazoo Public Library against six other Michigan libraries of similar size and six other national libraries of similar size with similar annual expenditures to understand how the Kalamazoo Public Library stands in relation to its peers. Additionally, consultants compiled and analyzed library usage statistics over a five-year period, examining uses such as circulation of materials, library visits, collection holdings, program attendance, etc., in order to identify trends. Lastly, consultants reviewed demographic information, including population projections and poverty levels.

Overview of the Planning Process (continued)

9. The Strategic Planning Committee met on December 5, 2018 to review the data package, community input summary, and staff/trustee focus group feedback. This was followed by the group participating in a SOAR analysis of the Library, identifying strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. The strengths provided the basis for the development of the library's core values. Aspirations became the basis of the library's Vision Statement, and opportunities resulted in the identification of three key strategic focus areas.
10. On December 12, 2018 MCLS consultants returned to the Kalamazoo Public Library to work with the Library's leadership team on the creation of a tactical plan to address the key strategic priorities that were identified by the Strategic Planning Committee. The group answered the questions for each priority: "What will the patron experience?"; "How will the community benefit?"; "What activities might occur?"; "What will success look like?"; "What organizational issues will need to be addressed including facilities, technology, policies, staffing, etc.?" This work created the basis for the development of goals, objectives, organizational competencies, and strategies that make up the three-year Strategic Plan.
11. Work continued into January through March 2019 with the creation of the draft strategic plan, including the refinement of goals, objectives, and strategies. Leadership Team created an initial implementation plan that addressed each potential strategy and assigned a target date for startup and/or completion, and which department(s) would be assigned responsibility. Organizational competencies needed for each strategy were created by early March, with the knowledge that assignments and work related to each new initiative will reveal a plan that is flexible and evolving, in order to adapt to changes that may be needed along the way.

Kalamazoo Public Library's

Vision

Leading a stronger community through literacy, learning, and innovation

Community Aspirations

Equitable and Inclusive, Literate and Educated, Informed, Creative

Core Values

At the Kalamazoo Public Library:

We are committed to excellence in programs, services and collections.

We are community-focused.

We are committed to and intentional about equity and anti-racism.

We have safe, beautiful, and comfortable spaces.

We are committed to continuous improvement and innovation.

We have a passionate, engaged, knowledgeable, and creative staff.

Key Strategic Priorities: 2019–2022

The Strategic Planning Committee recommended that the library board adopt three strategic areas of focus for the period 2019–2022. The key focus areas are:

Engaging the Community

Community members will be informed about the events, programs, and services available in the community, be aware of community issues and current and historical community events, and be connected to one another.

Advancing Equity and Inclusion:

Library Services for All in our Diverse Community

Community members will have access to library services and programs that meet and reflect their diverse needs.

Inspiring Literacy, Learning, and Experiences

Community members will have learning resources and experiences throughout their lives to prepare and support them for school, work, and daily life.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

KEY PRIORITY 1 – Engaging the Community

Goal 1: Create a more informed and integrated community by providing spaces, services, and collections allowing engagement on civic and current issues with one another.

Objectives:

- By attending Community Conversations or civic engagement events at the library, people will be more aware of some issues in the community.
- By attending Community Conversations or civic engagement events at the library, people will be more engaged in the community.
- Use of the library building for community meetings and discussions will increase.

Strategies:

Community members told us that an engaged citizenry is important for collaborative solutions and informed residents. The library wants to play a central role in strengthening the human capital of Kalamazoo by facilitating community dialogues, developing spaces for groups to meet, providing forums on issues that are important to the community, and providing collections that support learning about issues of public concern.

Goal 2: Provide and curate local resources that will enable community members to have a deeper understanding of Kalamazoo, past and present.

Objectives:

- There will be an increase in the number of people using local history resources and services at all branch locations.
- By using the local history resources at the library, people will learn something about the community or their own personal history.

Strategies:

Understanding the history of Kalamazoo and the history of the neighborhoods that make up Kalamazoo is important to our community. The library wants to give everyone access to local history resources and programs and focus on neighborhood history at branch locations. The library can also improve access to local history resources through the use of technology at all locations, providing onsite digitization services, and more digitally advanced and interactive delivery of local history and interesting local places.

Key Priority 1 continued on page 8 ...

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies: KEY PRIORITY 1 (continued)

Goal 3: Improve awareness and access to community events and resources.

Objectives:

- By accessing information on local resources at the library, people's awareness of the community will improve.
- Local service agencies will consider the library an important partner in increasing awareness of issues and resources.
- Use of the online organizations database will increase.

Strategies:

People want to be informed about important events in the community and want to know where to turn in the community for local resources and information. The library wants to play a role in creating that informed community by partnering with local service agencies to develop a plan for quick responses to local issues, and by developing a means to partner with others in the aggregation or curation of community events. Providing authoritative vital statistics is another means by which the library can assist community members with local information needs.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (continued)

KEY PRIORITY 2 – Pursuing Equity and Inclusion: Library Services for All in our Diverse Community

Goal 1: Provide to everyone in our community equal, barrier-free access to library services, collections and programs.

Objectives:

- The number of active library card holders will increase in all zip codes of KPL's service area.
- The number of people registering as a new library card holder will increase in all zip codes of KPL's service area.
- People will be able to access the materials and services they need, when and where they need them.
- People will be able to use library facilities with ease.

Strategies:

Removing barriers for community members to access the library's services, collections, and programs is essential to providing equal access to all. The library wants to establish a public presence in areas throughout the community where it may be more difficult to come to the library by utilizing technology, mobile services, pop-up programs, delivery, or other tools. The library wants to ensure that the physical library locations are inclusive and accessible for all by reviewing signage and digital wayfinding, by conducting a disability audit, and viewing the layout of service desks through an inclusive lens. The library wants to review other potential barriers to use, such as fines, and use data-driven decisions that lead to the best use of resources and maximize the impact on our community.

Goal 2: Develop and maintain an informed and compassionate library staff that reflects the makeup of our diverse community.

Objectives:

- The library staff will be informed about the needs of the community.
- When people interact with the staff, they will be treated with respect.
- KPL staff demographics will increasingly reflect those of the community.

Strategies:

The community of Kalamazoo aspires to be diverse, equitable, inclusive, and safe for everyone. The library wants to be an organization that reflects those aspirations by hiring and developing staff that are prepared to face the changing needs of the community. The Library wants to develop an inclusive staff recruitment policy, an EEO/Affirmative Action plan, scholarships, and strategies to create an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment and strive toward becoming an anti-racist organization. Providing specialized staff positions or training for staff in social justice, mental health, and social services will ensure that the library has informed and compassionate staff.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES (continued)

KEY PRIORITY 3 – Inspiring Literacy, Learning, and Experiences

Goal 1: Provide opportunities for lifelong learning to create success in school, the workplace, and in life.

Objectives:

- People who use library collections will learn something that is helpful for their lives.
- People who use digital resources will learn something that is helpful for their lives.
- People who attend programs will learn something that is helpful for their lives.
- People who attend programs will feel more confidence in what they have learned.
- People who attend programs will apply what they have learned.
- More people of all ages will attend library programs.

Strategies:

Public libraries provide a lifetime of learning opportunities, offering diverse experiences and filling gaps in other educational programs found in the community. The library wants to offer new opportunities around multiple literacies, including reading, digital literacy, life skills, financial literacy, and cultural programming. New opportunities might include creating curricula and serialized learning through ongoing classes around particular subjects or offering drop-in training in practical skills utilizing on-site experts.

Goal 2: Provide opportunities and access for community members to be creative through hands-on experiences.

Objectives:

- By attending hands-on programs, people will be able to add new skills to their résumé or personal learning.
- By attending hands-on programs, people will be more willing to try new technologies.
- People will be able to express their creativity through hands-on programs.
- More people of all ages will attend hands-on programs at the library.

Strategies:

Our community members told us they want opportunities for new experiences. They want to be creative and experiment. The library wants to provide hands-on experiences for people of all ages by developing creative spaces for music, art, technology, and innovation, and expanding maker experiences to all audiences. KPL can use the “pop-up” concept for programming and events to expand experiences beyond the physical buildings, and can create a “Library of Things” with corresponding skill-building workshops that complement the collection.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Community Conversations and Interviews

The library used a combination of both Community Conversations and one-on-one interviews with a wide variety of community residents and community leaders. The Conversations and interviews were based on The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation model of community engagement, which seeks to “Turn Outward” to the community to determine their aspirations, and in turn prioritize services that are in alignment with the true needs of the community.

Five Community Conversations were held between Oct. 25 and 30, 2018. The Conversations took place at the Central, Oshtemo, and Powell libraries. The Conversations were facilitated by David Votta of Midwest Collaborative for Library Services. These were opportunities for residents to discuss their aspirations for the community and the concerns they have about reaching those aspirations, and to identify areas where the library might help. Forty-three community members participated in the 90-minute conversations. Additionally, the members of the Library’s Strategic Planning Committee conducted one-on-one interviews with various community leaders, seeking similar information. Fifty-seven community leaders were interviewed.

The notes from the Conversations and interviews have been summarized in a blended Community Narrative and Public Knowledge Summary. The community aspirations and community concerns have also been organized in word cloud illustrations, with words that community members used to describe their aspirations and concerns.

Community Narrative

Kalamazoo residents openly shared their aspirations and concerns. Additionally, during the conversations several residents questioned and pushed back on their fellow residents for more information and how they could better connect and together make a stronger impact on the community. The following is a narrative of the information, summarized in a blended form of The Harwood Institute models of the “Community Narrative” and “Public Knowledge Summary.”

Kalamazoo Public Library Community Narrative/ Public Knowledge Summary

The community served by the Kalamazoo Public Library aspires to be equitable, inclusive, open and transparent, creative, collaborative, informed, and one that focuses on literacy and education, in many forms, for the entirety of a resident’s lifetime. The community wants to be supportive, healthy, diverse, engaged, safe for everyone, one that respects and enjoys nature, and one that understands its past.

Equitable and Inclusive

Every Conversation, and nearly every interview, at least touched on equity and inclusion. In some Conversations those themes were ubiquitous and wove their way through discussions about housing, education, racial justice and reconciliation, access to resources, use of green space, recognition of the LGBTQ community, having a seat at the decision-making table, and more. The Conversations were flowing and went deep. In one Conversation there was a lengthy discussion around “collective ownership” and how the community can begin to stop the “yours vs. ours” mentality by intentionally reimagining the language around a traditional hierarchy mindset. It was said that, “Full inclusion means full participation from people of all identities. Various barriers need to be removed for all people to fully participate from every identity in making positive change in Kalamazoo.” Frequently, concerns around affordable housing were the subject which prompted discussions of equity and inclusion. Some remarked about the historic disenfranchisement of people of color trying to purchase a home. Specifically, the practice of redlining was brought up in both interviews and Conversations. Interconnected with this issue of housing were concerns around the homeless situation in Kalamazoo.

Open and Transparent

There was discussion around not just transparency in government and local organizations, but also openness among residents, especially those of different backgrounds. Silos were mentioned as mechanisms that keep organizations and groups of people, however they self-identify, or society identifies them, from hearing one another and the community at large.

Creative

People from many different backgrounds and walks of life spoke about the need for creativity. This creativity was discussed as a need for beautiful and thought-provoking public art, and as an outlet for many people, professional and amateur, to express themselves and engage others and their community. Creativity was also discussed as an essential component to economic prosperity and diversity.

APPENDIX A (continued)

Collaborative

Throughout the Conversations and interviews, it was universally agreed upon that to really make progress the community needs to do a better job of collaboration. It was said many times that Kalamazoo is, “resource rich and reality poor.” The disconnect discussed was alignment and coordination of resources with those in need. Some brought up the concern of not identifying where gap funding could connect existing services to provide continuous support. Again, silos were mentioned, as well as organizations competing for funds and constituents. It was said that if service agencies and organizations collaborated to create a singular vision and goals for the community, then there would be a better chance for a collective response to challenges and stronger buy-in from everyone.

Informed

Repeatedly, residents commented how they felt they did not know what was happening in the community. This disconnect was not just on an individual basis; some mentioned they believed organizations, departments, and institutions did not know what one another, or the community, was doing. There was desire expressed to know and understand what is happening and who has resources, and a desire to connect all that information. Many agreed there was positive movement within the community. However, it was noted that there is scant visible accountability and follow-through. It was said that when people and entities were better connected, informed, and then were reporting out more widely about their work, that would be a good indicator that sustainable progress was being made.

Literate and Educated

Literacy and education were addressed several different ways. Many Conversations and interviews stressed the need for early childhood education, and the need to support students throughout their academic career. Some said the Kalamazoo Promise was a great boon, but that it could be administered more effectively and that there is not enough emphasis to prepare students to take advantage of the Promise. There was widely a strong appetite to better support K12 and whatever comes after. Beyond traditional academics, there were conversations around better support for trade schools. Additionally, there were several conversations around learning life skills, diversity training, and education for art and cultural enrichment for people of all ages. There was a call for “experiential learning for all youth and adults.” Participants wanted opportunities for new experiences, and to learn from and connect with one another as well as from experts.

Supportive

Many expressed that to fully actualize the potential of the Kalamazoo community, there needs to be greater support for everyone, especially those most vulnerable: children, homeless, single parents, and those recently released from incarceration. It was said that empowering people to make their own decisions, and working with them to develop their own goals and solutions, would reduce recidivism and help break cycles of dependency on social service agencies and resources.

APPENDIX A (continued)

Healthy

From recreational activities to healthy food options, concerns over a healthy population—physically, mentally, and emotionally—arose many times. A lack of access to transportation was believed to be exacerbating the situation. Some mentioned that neighborhoods were isolated, and residents could not easily access healthcare or healthy shopping opportunities. Substance abuse and mental health were also addressed. There was a desire expressed that information about healthy options would be made widely available, so everyone could access them.

Diverse

Participants from various backgrounds, ages, socio-economic status, and other variant factors all spoke about the aspiration that their community continue to diversify. People stated they wanted community members from all backgrounds to participate and that everyone be given the same opportunities and chance/platform to be heard.

Engaged

It was said that the same small group of people make the majority of decisions in Kalamazoo, that most of the populace does not participate civically, volunteer, or contribute other than to meet their own immediate needs. Some mentioned that if greater collaboration was to be actualized it would only come through an engaged citizenry. Engagement was referenced not just about adults with organizations and the city, but with people being more engaged with their families, and children being more engaged in their education.

Safe

Safety was referenced in many of the Conversations and interviews. It manifested as people wanting to feel comfortable in their neighborhoods, walking and biking in all areas. Some worried about gun violence and crime. Others were concerned that young women could not walk around downtown without being harassed. It was mentioned that some were fearful of the homeless, while others feared for the safety of the homeless. Several mentioned a fear of racial profiling and that people of color felt less safe than others.

Respects and Enjoys Nature

The green spaces in and around Kalamazoo were referenced many times in the Conversations and interviews. There was an abundant appetite for the community to retain, enhance, and if possible, expand those spaces. Some mentioned an opportunity for more programming around nature. Others touted the healthy benefits of outdoor recreation—walking, biking, running, and even “forest bathing”—simply taking in the natural world as a way to decompress and relieve stress.

Understands the Community's Past

There were stark differences in the way residents referenced the history of Kalamazoo. All agreed that understanding the history was important. Some spoke about the importance of knowing the founders of the community and how the city grew and became an important industrial and educational center. Others referenced the history of redlining, and how the city grew specifically with racial segregation as an intentional tool to keep people of color in certain neighborhoods, and, with that, marginalizing their access to resources and full participation as community members.

APPENDIX B

KPL Strengths and Aspirations: 12/05/18

Strengths

- Welcoming
- Knowledgeable staff
- Patron-focused
- Community-oriented
- ARTT
- Law library
- Support from community
- Variety of programs
- Local history
- Number of locations
- Art
- Partnering with other organizations
- Well-maintained buildings
- Reading Together program
- Commitment to remove barriers
- Internet access computers
- Staff availability
- Open hours
- Community trust
- Friends of the Library
- Lifetime engagement
- Access to materials and services
- Strong youth services
- Access
- Time
- Innovation
- Outreach
- Safe, beautiful spaces
- Community partners
- Passionate, engaged staff
- Opportunities for personal development
- Services to respond to community needs
- Accountability to all
- Board investment and service
- Special services
 - Law
 - Family Place
 - Youth Literature Seminar
 - Teen
- Commitment and intentionality to equity and anti-racism
- Community support and partnership trust
- Strong commitment to early learning
- Open hours and access
- Staff dedicated to service
- Focus on underserved
- Books to own for adults and kids
- Staff dedicated, caring, well-trained, and committed
- Ready to Read program
- Generous, strong, budget stability
- Outreach commitment to meet people where they are
- Buildings safe, comfortable, beautiful, sq. footage
- Future-thinking
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Engaged personnel and engaged community
- Tons of programs
- Social justice resolution
- Community financial support
- ARTT challenging systematic racism
- Consistently empathetic staff—compassionate to all patrons
- Guided, knowledgeable access—help finding books
- Interactive—proactive service
- Creative and collaborative staff
- Safe, diverse working environment
- Aspiring to be more diverse
- Excellent Reading Together program partnering
- Financially responsible stewards of public money
- Commitment for improvement—striving for better
- Access to new and emerging technologies
- Commitment to inclusion

APPENDIX B (continued)

Strengths (continued)

- Staff passionate, committed, relatable, friendly
 - Diverse programming
 - Innovation
 - Building spaces unique
 - Accessibility to a wide variety of materials
 - in a wide variety of formats
 - Safe space for everyone
 - Institutional culture
 - Partnerships and collaboration
 - Reputation—known as a great library system
-

Aspirations

Bolded with an asterisk are the high-level aspirations derived from Affinity Mapping

- **Community leadership***
- **Technology as a tool***
- **Innovative and sustainable***
- **Equity***
- Relevant building spaces
- Powell Branch in own building
- Physically and technologically accessible space for those with disabilities
- New/renovated branches/buildings
- Functional, usable spaces and branches
- Maintaining green space
- Fully green
- Transportation to the library is more accessible
- Fully diverse staff at all levels
- Staff diversity matches community
- Open access to all—no barriers
- Library has something of value for everyone
- Change in statistics/disparities in Kalamazoo because of the library
- Intentional outreach to underserved
- Outreach services department
- Stronger coordinated outreach
- Kalamazoo County exceeds the benchmark for 3rd grade reading
- Equity mindset structurally baked into all decision-making, hiring, services, etc.
- Youth leaderships collections, programs, services
- No branch silos
- We care more about the community, less about ourselves
- Confident and consistent use of data in all areas of operation
- Social workers and peer navigators
- Engaged, active, diverse resources—even more!
- Zero-word disparity in Kalamazoo community
- Multi-lingual staff
- Programs, services, collections all reflect patrons
- More racially diverse staff
- Fine-free library
- No fines for lost or damaged materials
- Business services
- Co-working spaces
- Partnership with KPS for college readiness roadmap/planning
- KPL managing KPS library systems
- Library is necessary
- Everyone sees a need to use the Library
- Library is more than a library
- Reach 50% more of the community with programs and services
- Known nationally as an innovator
- When people think of Kalamazoo, they think of the library
- Leading by example
- Organizations see KPL as an essential partner

APPENDIX B (continued)

Aspirations (continued)

- Stronger innovation
- KPL is recognized as a leader in the community
- Increased use of ONEplace
- Increase of African American-owned businesses because of ONEplace
- ONEplace hosted leadership Tedx
- Promote ONEplace to all nonprofits in Kalamazoo
- Neutral community convening
- The library has remained a vital and relevant part of the community
- Faster response to community needs
- Center for Community Conversations
- Community center with resources and access to voiceless
- KPL has met the Community Narrative
- Techmobile
- Seamless website experience between physical and e-formats
- Digital access new technology
- Tech advances adapting
- eCar charging
- Library works to anticipate and adapt to a changing environment
- KPL wifi throughout the city